

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
20 April 1975

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Indochina
(As of 0800 EDST)
No. 18

VIETNAM

East of Saigon

1. The government's position continues to deteriorate in eastern Military Region 3. The Communists are now pushing into the region along coastal Route 1 and are reportedly approaching Ham Tan, the capital of Binh Tuy Province. Ham Tan is lightly defended by newly reorganized units of the 22nd Division. They are no match for the Communists, and the town is expected to fall soon.

2. The regional commander has decided to withdraw the badly mauled 18th Division and 1st Airborne Brigade from Xuan Loc, thereby abandoning Long Khanh Province to the Communists. The government forces at Xuan Loc had been under heavy attack, and one regiment of the 18th Division has already been destroyed in the fighting. The remaining units probably are no longer capable of heavy combat.

3. The withdrawal of these forces will leave Bien Hoa vulnerable. At present, Bien Hoa is guarded by only two brigades of Marines and some armor, but the region's commander plans to move another Marine brigade to the area. The Communists on the other hand have several divisions near Xuan Loc that they can now concentrate against Bien Hoa. There are reports that some Communist units are moving toward Bien Hoa, and heavy fighting has broken out east of the town. The nearby airbase also came under attack from artillery Sunday morning.

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including as much as 60 percent of its remaining munitions, at Long Binh and the loss of the facility would severely handicap government operations.

5. Communist forces intensified their attacks in Long An Province, and they have overrun a number of outposts in Ben Luc district. Fighting was sporadic in most of the delta.

6. Northwest of Saigon, North Vietnamese troops supported by tanks and artillery have launched heavy new attacks south of Tay Ninh City. They have cut Route 22 in the southern part of the province, isolating the provincial capital. Tay Ninh City is defended by few government troops, and it probably will soon fall to the Communists.

Call For New Government and Negotiations

9. On April 23, the Catholic opposition leader Father Thanh, retired General "Big" Minh, former senate chairman Nguyen Van Huyen and Buddhist opposition leader Senator Vu Van Mau plan to issue a joint proclamation demanding the immediate resignation of President Thieu. It calls for the formation of a "national leadership council" to be headed by the same four leaders with a cabinet composed of two-thirds "rightists"--presumably military officers and others closely identified with the present government--and one-third "leftists"--presumably elements represented by the four opposition leaders.

The hazy plan of action for the proposed new government appears to consist of immediate negotiations with the Communists and establishment of the National Council of Reconciliation called for in the Paris Accords. Under the opposition scenario the "leftist" faction of the government would concentrate on political competition with the Communists within the Council, while the "rightist" faction would attempt to stabilize the military situation in what remains of GVN territory.

Thieu Intends to Stay

10. Meanwhile, President Thieu still shows every sign of intending to stay in office. Within the next week, he plans to deliver a speech which will make this intention clear and which will challenge the US Congress to make a clear decision on future support to Saigon. Thieu intends to deny that he is an obstacle to peace but will reiterate that he will never agree to a Communist takeover in the South. In this regard, Thieu will maintain that he would step down only if this would ensure quick and sufficient US assistance and only if the US agrees to "react vigorously against Communist aggression."



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